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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council authorizes increase of up to 12,500 troops in strength of UNPROFOR; says rapid reaction capacity will enable Force to carry out its mandate; financial modalities to be determined at later time.

* Special Representative Akashi appeals to Bosnian parties for immediate cease-fire amid intense fighting in and around Sarajevo; demands lifting of restrictions on humanitarian deliveries; five French peace-keepers wounded in incident at weapons collection point.

* Security Council extends UNMOT mandate until 15 December, subject to Tajik parties' continuation of cease-fire agreement and commitment to national reconciliation.

* Security Council condemns offensive actions in Croatia and intimidation of UNCRO personnel; says it will not countenance moves to establish union between Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* Secretary-General meets with Co-Chairmen of International Conference to discuss deteriorating situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* Bosnian Government says its Army has taken defensive measures to prevent further strangulation of Sarajevo; alleges international community has not acted to prevent catastrophe.

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The Security Council this morning authorized an increase of up to 12,500 troops for the United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF)/United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), in order to establish a rapid reaction capacity to enable UNPF/UNPROFOR to carry out its mandate. The modalities for the financing of the Force will be determined at a later time. The Council took that action,

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under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, by adopting resolution 998 (1995). There were 13 votes in favour to none against, with two abstentions (China and the Russian Federation).

The Council requested that the Secretary-General, in taking decisions on the deployment of UNPROFOR personnel, take full account of the need to enhance their security. It demanded that the Bosnian Serbs immediately and unconditionally release all detained UNPROFOR personnel. All parties must fully respect the safety of UNPROFOR personnel and others engaged in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and ensure their complete freedom of movement.

The Council demanded that the parties allow unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly the safe areas. It demanded that they respect fully the status of the safe areas and ensure the safety of their civilian populations. The Council also called on the parties to agree without delay to a cease-fire and a complete cessation of hostilities.

Explaining its abstention, the Russian Federation said the resolution gave the impression that it was addressed against one party. The United Nations should focus on ensuring the cooperation of both parties and promoting agreements on a cease-fire and a cessation of hostilities. China, which also abstained, said a rapid reaction force would change UNPROFOR's peace-keeping status. The United States said it could not agree to funding the rapid deployment force through the normal peace-keeping assessment process. It had supported the resolution on the understanding that it was not incurring any direct financial obligation.

The Secretary-General has estimated that increasing UNPROFOR's strength by 12,500 will cost $414 million for a six-month period. That figure provides for some 35 international civilian staff, 363 local staff and 406 United Nations Volunteers.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi today urgently appealed to the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serbs for an immediate cease-fire in and around Sarajevo, and for a complete cessation of hostilities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also demanded that restrictions on humanitarian aid deliveries and utility supplies be removed immediately.

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Mr. Akashi said both Bosnian parties had violated the heavy weapons and anti-sniping agreements, interfered with utilities, and engaged in increasingly fierce combat for tactical advantages on the ground. Attacks launched today by the Bosnian Government had led to an intensification of the fighting. He called attention to the plight of civilians on both sides, and said he was at the complete disposal of the parties in order to facilitate the de-escalation of the situation.

Meanwhile, a United Nations spokesman reported intense fighting in and around the Bosnian capital throughout the day. Clashes were taking place on the northern and southern confrontation lines and to the east and south-west of the airport. Overnight, the Bosnian Serbs removed nearly all their heavy weapons from the Tito Barracks collection point. They fired weapons from another collection point, wounding five French peace-keepers. Government forces also removed weapons from United Nations custody.

The spokesman noted that the Bosnian Serbs had also seized a United Nations tank and had fired several rounds from it. He strongly condemned that action, saying such misuse of United Nations equipment violated the Geneva Conventions. He went on to say that the Bosnian Serbs continued to hold 26 United Nations personnel hostage, and had denied another 91 freedom of movement. Bosnian Government forces had surrounded 15 Russian peace-keepers at an observation post in northern Sarajevo, and were still blockading 86 Ukrainian peace-keepers in Gorazde.

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The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) until 15 December, subject to the proviso that the 1994 cease-fire agreement remained in force. It said the parties must continue to be committed to an effective cease-fire, to national reconciliation and to the promotion of democracy. The Council decided that UNMOT's mandate would remain in effect unless the Secretary-General reported that those conditions had not been met. It took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 999 (1995).

The Council stressed that the parties must achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict through the inter-Tajik dialogue, and cooperate fully with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy. It called on them to agree to the early convening of a further round of inter-Tajik talks and to implement all confidence-building measures agreed to at the fourth round. It cited measures on the exchange of detainees and prisoners of war, and on the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons in dignity and safety. The

Council asked the Secretary-General to continue efforts to speed up progress towards national reconciliation, and to report to it on that progress and on UNMOT operations.

The Council emphasized that the parties must comply fully with all obligations they had assumed, and strictly observe and substantially extend the current cease-fire agreement. It stressed the urgency of the cessation of all hostile acts on the Tajik-Afghan border, and called on all States to discourage any activities that could complicate or hinder the peace process in Tajikistan.

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In a third meeting today, the Council condemned the intimidation of personnel of the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) and the continuation of offensive actions in that country. In a statement by its President, Detlev Graf zu Rantzau (Germany), the Council said it looked to the Croatian parties to cooperate fully and unconditionally with UNCRO in the performance of its mandate. It also looked to them to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of UNCRO personnel.

The statement demanded that the parties fulfil their commitments under the March 1994 cease-fire agreement, particularly in respect of withdrawal of all forces from the zones of separation, and fully implement the December 1994 economic agreement. It called on them to respect the international border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to stop any action which extended the conflict across that border. The Council again warned that if the parties did not refrain from military actions that could escalate the situation, it would consider further steps to ensure compliance with its resolution 994 (1995).

The Council noted the Secretary-General's judgement that the redeployment of United Nations peace-keepers in Croatia could not be completed by 30 June. It requested him to proceed expeditiously with the redeployment. The Council went on to say that it could not countenance moves by the local Serb authorities in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to establish a union between them, as that would be inconsistent with the Council's commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the two countries.

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The Secretary-General met today with the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg and Carl Bildt. They discussed developments in the area, focusing on the deteriorating situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Mr. Bildt later told correspondents that the escalation of fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina brought very great dangers. He urged the Bosnian Serbs to end their strangulation of Sarajevo. "I can understand the concerns of the Bosnian Government in this respect, although one must be very much aware of the risks of further escalation of the violence and suffering that any sort of major operation brings," he said.

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The Bosnian Republic today said that its military operation in the Sarajevo area was intended to prevent the further strangulation of the city. A statement by the President of the Bosnian Presidency accused the "Pale Serbs" of seeking a solution to the conflict based on force, genocide and ethnic cleansing. They had killed civilians while violating the exclusion zone around Sarajevo, cut off humanitarian access and utility supplies to the city, and continued to deploy troops and weapons around it. Meanwhile, the statement asserted, the international community had not taken any measures to prevent the catastrophe.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey told correspondents at Headquarters that the Bosnian Serbs had increased their manpower and heavy weapons concentrations around Sarajevo, creating an urgent situation which had to be dealt with immediately. It was hypocritical of the international community to call for a halt to military activity while allowing the Serbs to continue the siege and to further entrench their heavy weapons, he said.

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